Samantha Beal May 18, 2011

Laying Down the Line

In the Beal household, there are so many rules and laws that an outsider might think our house follows the detailed and precise directions from a copy of *Controlling Your Kids for Dummies* or something. Everything is strictly and strongly enforced at my house, and it’s impossible for anyone to get away with stealing a cookie, let alone murder. My parents believe in discipline, a thing, I am told, we are lucky to have, because, “You won’t grow up wild and you’ll have a good, moral mind and a respectable character and besides, someday you’ll have kids just like you and just think how you can do it to *them* when *you* get older!”

Alright. Maybe discipline is necessary for children; maybe I will grow up to be a better person because I’ve grown up with the standards my parents set. Maybe I will get farther in life than someone whose parents let them roam the streets every night and get high on Jolly Ranchers whenever they please. Maybe my mom has something there when she says I won’t get any cavities since I’m not allowed to chew gum, even though I’m the only American girl in the whole world who doesn’t know what Juicy Fruit tastes like. You must admit; not all discipline seems fair, especially now that I’m almost sixteen and will be able to drive by the year’s end. For instance, I don’t totally agree that if I do poorly in a class I should be subjected to absolute isolation until I’m twenty-one. If I get in trouble at school, I get in trouble at home; conversely I’m never to start “it,” but if I don’t finish “it,” punishment will be swift and severe.

To be fair, though we have many “unfair and unnecessary” laws, as my brother and I refer to them, that when contravened result in capital punishment, my parents really do have rules that make sense. While the previous commandments usually do actually have some flexibility, the following do not. Being kind and considerate to others is a must. My parents have let me know in no-uncertain-terms that to disobey one of these would not be tolerated. My brother and I always were told to stick-up for those who need to be defended, and we do this because we have been taught it is the right thing to do. We try not to gossip or talk badly about other classmates, something that we might get grounded or a tongue-lashing for if Mom or Dad ever heard. We treat our teachers and coaches with respect, and we don’t interrupt class for pointless reasons. If we are having a problem with someone at school or on a team, we bring it to our parents, and they give us their views on it, leaving us to find our own solutions.

Needless to say, Mom and Dad have the rules that they do for us kids, because they’re what they themselves grew up with. Like many, their expectations were set long-ago when the first parent in their family made a rule for their child, and slowly, everything has been passed down from generation to generation, along with the old quilts and poor vision. As my parents before me, I will give the principles I suffered with to my children, and I expect they will pass the misery along. And who knows; maybe I’ll have a future heir who is the best-behaved person in the world!